

Values-Guided Problem-Solving

There are three ways to respond to any challenging situation:

- **Option one:** leave the situation. (Of course, this is not always possible - or it may not be the best choice at this time.)
- **Option two:** change what can be changed, make room for the painful thoughts and feelings that are inevitable, and live by your values, behaving like the sort of person you want to be.
- **Option three:** lose touch with your values, and do things that either don't help the situation or make it worse.

Obviously, no one deliberately chooses option three - but when we get hooked by difficult thoughts and feelings, it's what we often tend to do. That is why you've been learning to unhook from and make room for difficult thoughts and feelings: so that if option one is not possible, or does not seem like a good choice right now, then you can choose option two instead of option three. So let's explore option two in more detail.



Step 1: What Is The Situation?

Choose a problematic situation in the IMMEDIATE world around you - in your home, family, work, neighbourhood or community; a situation that you can realistically influence directly through what you say and do.

What situation do you want to deal with?



Step 2: Values

What values do you want to live by as you deal with this situation?

Name at least two or three:



Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Actions

Is there anything you can say or do to influence this situation for the better?

- Come up with as many ideas as possible. Do not judge them as good or bad or right or wrong or silly or clever – just identify as many ideas as possible, even if your mind says they are bad or silly or hopeless or unrealistic.
- Remember: even TINY steps are important and meaningful, all the more so if larger steps are not possible right now. And the size of the step does not matter. If you are acting on your values, then you are doing something meaningful.

- Consider reaching out to other people: your actions may involve reaching out to other people, getting their help or support. (This may include reaching out to friends and family, getting support or advice from health professionals, joining various communities or groups.)

Write down as many ideas as possible - for actions you can take with your hands & arms and feet & legs, and words you can say with your mouth – to influence your difficult situation for the better. It doesn't matter how tiny the actions are.

Possible actions I could take include:



Step 4: Create An Action Plan

Out of all the ideas you brainstormed, choose something that seems realistic, and likely to be effective, and turn it into an action plan.

- What actions will you do with your arms and hands, your legs and feet?
- What words will you use, and how will you say them?

Make sure you choose something that seems realistic. Score it on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 = I will definitely do this, and 0 = there's no way I am ever going to do this. You need to score at least a 7. If your score is less than that, choose something smaller, easier, and simpler, until your score rises to at least 7.

Action plan: what I will say and do:

How realistic is it that I will do this, 0-10?

(If less than 7, modify the plan: make it smaller, simpler, easier, until your score rises to 7)

5

Step 5: Take Action

Follow through on your action plan, and pay close attention to what happens.

- Notice what values you are living.
- Notice what you say and do.
- Notice what thoughts and feelings show up.
- Notice the effects of your actions.

6

Step 6: Assess The Outcome

Reflect on the action you took in step 5 and assess how effective it was.

How did you handle any difficult thoughts & feelings?

Did you act consistently with your values?

What effects did your actions have?

Did you/can you learn anything useful from this?

What could you change or modify, to get better results next time?